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Expression of the bcl-2 protooncogene in the cycling adult mouse hair follicle.

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The hair follicle undergoes a cycle of growing, regressing, and resting phases (anagen, catagen, telogen, respectively). As the follicle enters catagen, the cells of the lower, cycling portion undergo a process of controlled cell death (apoptosis). Understanding the mechanism of apoptosis in the follicle should give insight into one of the control steps of hair cycling. In this study we sought the expression of bcl-2, a protooncogene associated with apoptosis control, in the cycling follicle of the adult mouse. Using a monoclonal antibody to the mouse protein we immunolocalized bcl-2 gene product in the cycling pelage follicle of the C57/B6 adult mouse. The protein was expressed in the follicular papilla (a non-cycling portion of the follicle) throughout the cycle-including telogen. The cycling follicular epithelium, however, showed positive antibody staining in anagen, which decreased in catagen and disappeared in telogen. In anagen the cells of the bulb, bulge, and basal layer of the outer root sheath expressed the bcl-2 protein. Understanding the action of this apoptosis-inhibiting molecule should serve to elucidate the dynamics of follicular cycling.

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